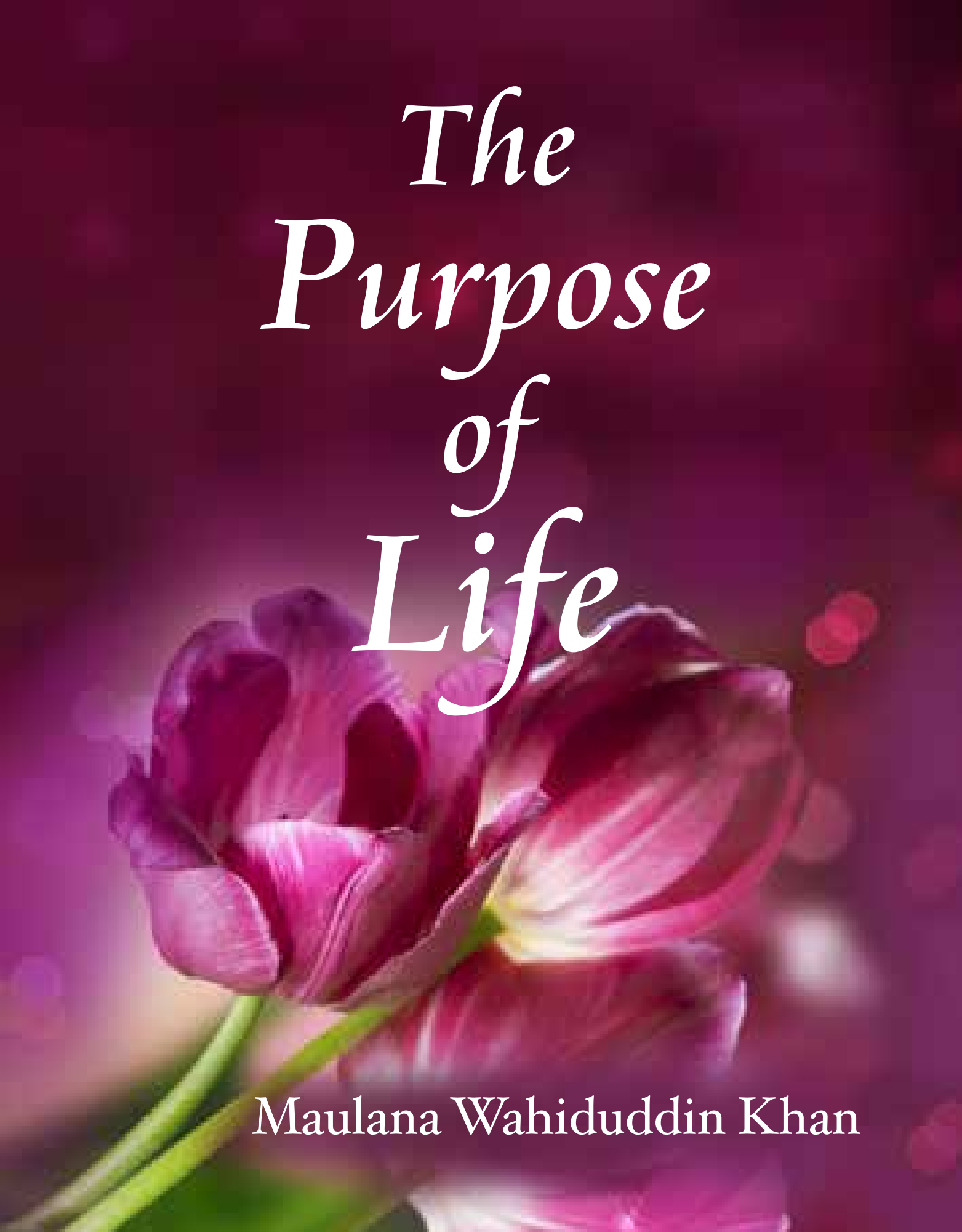

The Purpose of Life
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Human Destiny

If some being from outer space were to traverse the universe in a spaceship and land on the planet earth, he would be dumbfounded at the uniqueness of what he saw, namely, human beings and many other forms of life. For the earth, in sustaining these life forms, is the outstanding exception amongst all the stellar bodies which are scattered throughout the immensity of the cosmos. Amongst the myriad stars, in the vastness of space, there are certainly a number of other planets in existence, and, like the earth, they are constantly revolving around their suns in their many respective galaxies, but on their gaseous or dry rocky surfaces there is no trace of life as we know it. If, indeed, there is life on this earth, it is only because of the life-sustaining things that are found in abundance everywhere, i.e. all those pro-life factors which add up to the human life support system.

Those who are born on this planet earth and

live their entire lives here do not realize the astonishing singularity of nature. The reason is that, having seen the earth since childhood, day in and day out, they have become habituated to its many features. Thus, they fail to notice how exceptional are their physical surroundings. Had it not been so, every morning, they would cry out: “Oh! what a beautiful earth, what a perfect world!”

The unique nature of the life-giving aspect of the planet earth has existed since time immemorial, but it is only in modern times that scientific discoveries have made this fact common knowledge. The man of today appreciates to a far greater extent than ever before the very special nature of the earth’s life support system.

What is this life support system? It is a gift which has been given to man by a Giver. In such a situation it is essential that man should strive to recognize his Benefactor, acknowledge the Giver of this gift and submit

to Him wholeheartedly. And, having done his best to understand why the Giver has bestowed this unique gift upon him, he should lead his life in accordance with the will of the Giver. But this does not happen.

Man, in leading his life in this world, tries to build a bright future for himself and his children and ultimately builds a civilization for himself. But it never occurs to him that he should attempt to find out who has created the unique system which sustains his life or what its Maker wants from human beings. Moreover, he has no clear appreciation of the fact that everything in this world has: its right use and its wrong use. Take for instance iron -- a gift from our Creator. One use of iron is the construction of useful machines, whereas another use of iron is the manufacture of destructive weapons. Evidently, the manufacture of useful machines is the right use, while the manufacture of destructive weapons is the wrong use.

The same is true of nature’s life support

system in that it may be looked at from two different angles, a right one and a wrong one. One who looks at it from the right angle will develop the correct and desired attitude towards it, while one who looks at it from the wrong angle will develop an attitude towards it which is erroneous and undesirable in every respect.

Now the question arises as to how to determine which are the right and wrong angles with respect to the life support system. The only way in which we can do this is to learn about the Creation Plan devised by the Creator. It is through this Creation Plan that we shall learn which attitude towards the life support system is right and which attitude is wrong.

The Creation Plan regarding life, which we have been told of by God through His prophets, is that the Creator has created man as an eternal creature, with the first brief span of his life in the pre-death period and the rest of his life — a much longer period — in the post-death period. The pre-death period is that of trial and the post-

death period is that of reward or punishment, in accordance with how well or badly man has acquitted himself during the period of trial.

When human history has run its course, it will terminate with the Day of Judgement. The happenings on that day will be on an epic scale. Then the Creator of man will manifest Himself in order to mete out rewards or punishments commensurate with the record of human deeds on earth. Those who have passed the test will be blessed with eternal paradise, while those who have failed the test will be cast into eternal hell.

In the light of this Creation Plan of God, we can understand what man's attitude should be regarding life and the life support system. The right angle in the matter of the life support system is to look at it with the eyes of the Creator and the wrong angle is to look at it as a means to satisfy man's personal desires. The former is what makes man's attitude right and the latter is what makes it wrong.

When we look at it from this viewpoint, then

two different stances are adopted regarding life and the life support system. That which is formed in accordance with the plan of the Creator is that the life support system should be regarded as a test support system. On the contrary, when we look at it from the angle of egocentric human thinking, it takes on the character of a mere means of purveying enjoyment. In the first case, life is seen in terms of responsibility, whereas in the second case, life is reduced to an animal level —that is, eat, drink and be merry and then leave the world in that state.

In present times, scientific investigations have discovered the meaningfulness of human life and the life support system to a far greater extent than ever before. This should have resulted in man becoming more serious regarding the purpose of his life and, by making proper use of his blessings, he should have acknowledged the Giver of Blessings to a much greater degree than hitherto. But the result has

been totally the opposite. Man has forgotten the reality that the life support system is in actual fact a test support system. Instead, man has looked upon the life support system merely as a means of ensuring enjoyment, and his goal in life has been reduced to securing more and more material things for himself in order to make life increasingly enjoyable.

I am reminded of an experience I once had which taught me a valuable lesson. This experience is highly illustrative of the present state of affairs. In 1972, I had occasion to travel to a place of architectural interest in Rajasthan accompanied by Mufti Mohd. Jamaluddin Qasmi and some others. The building we had come to see was situated on top of an uninhabited hillock. We climbed the road leading up to it in a jeep, and when we reached the top, we witnessed an unimaginably strange sight. A large building with a spacious hall, built there in this desolate place, possibly by some raja or other ruler some two hundred

years ago was still intact, but there was no trace of human occupancy. On the contrary, there were hundreds of monkeys in and around the building. They scampered about, making shrill chattering, meaningless noises. There is something unique about the way of a monkey. It can occupy a place with impunity, and then run and jump about for no rhyme or reason. This being the state of affairs, we had to be content with seeing the building from the outside, and left without entering it.

I thought that these 'usurper' monkeys occupying the building did not care who had built it or for what purpose it had been built. They were just leaping about, jumping up and down and creating a meaningless clamour. Remaining totally unaware of such questions, they were indulging in activities which were little short of criminal, and which were far from being the proper use of the building.

Then I began to wonder whether this *criminal* use of such a beautiful building would go on, or

would its builder eventually appear and punish the monkeys for such outrageous behaviour and then hand it over to those for whom it was built?

Let us reflect upon this example. This building had been constructed for a specific purpose. So it should, strictly speaking, have been used for the purpose it was intended for. But instead, it had been infested with monkeys who, with gay abandon, had begun to indulge in wild, noisy, riotous behaviour.

This example is analogous to the entire world of today. The present planet earth has become like that building, only on a far greater scale, the men and women who have spread all over the earth having behaved with extreme irresponsibility. They look at the earth with the sole intention of fulfilling their desires, totally oblivious of the reality of who has built this world and for what purpose.

How has this come about? In present times when science has discovered and made known

the facts of the life support system, disseminating them on the greatest possible scale, exactly at the same time another development has taken place, viz. the coming into existence of a new culture, called the culture of instant gratification. For a variety of reasons this has happened all over the world. Where enjoyment is constantly sought, an environment has been built up in which people have come to expect that everything that exists here is meant for man's enjoyment.

Thus, under the influence of the environment, rather than as a result of any rational thinking, the life support system has virtually assumed the position of an "enjoyment-support" system. And this has reduced human society to the animal level.

What is the difference between man and the animals? The difference lies in the fact that while an animal is aware only of its own interests, man, ideally, besides being aware of his personal interests, recognizes his responsibility and fulfills its demands.

But in the world of today it appears that this difference has been obliterated. Human culture today is little better than the culture of the animals. Besides the apparent differences, there seems to be no real difference.

But this is not a simple matter. This clearly amounts to deviating from the path of nature. And deviation from the path of nature always becomes the cause of double deprivation. That is to say, deprivation in the pre-death period as well as in the post-death period. By misusing his freedom in this world, man can deviate from the path of nature, but he has not the power to save himself from the fatal consequences of doing so. This is the greatest danger facing the human being of today.

What it means to be deprived in the pre-death period can be understood by everyone judging from his own personal experiences. Everyone has an attractive goal before him. He spends all his time and energy attempting to reach this goal he has set for himself. But we find that,

finally, what everyone is destined to get is pure and simple frustration. In this world, everyone, be he rich or poor, dies ultimately in despair. No man or woman is an exception to this.

Why does this happen? The reason is that man dreams of reaching a particular destination, but in order to do this he requires certain resources, and the resources to fulfill such dreams just do not exist in this world. That is why, even after the greatest struggle, man's life is finally terminated without his having reached his desired goal.

Man has special faculties called the five senses — sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing. These five senses are in actual fact nodal factors in the human capacity for enjoyment. It is through each of these senses, that the enormous treasure of enjoyment which the Creator has placed at man's disposal impinges upon his consciousness. Sight is a purveyor of extremely pleasant experiences and so are touch, taste, smell and hearing. There is no other creature

in this universe, including the animals, who is possessed of the capacity to enjoy these pleasures in the way that man does. The ability to enjoy these uniquely elevated kinds of pleasures is an exceptional divine gift to man.

Man, moreover, possesses the capacity for thought. This uniquely human capacity is the greatest means of experiencing the highest form of pleasure. Thinking provides a limitless treasure house of pleasure for man. The act of thinking, which is seldom outwardly manifested, gives man the keenest sense of pleasure, which is just not realizable by any other means.

Although man has the capacity to experience these pleasures, he does not always find the means to satisfy his longing for the enjoyment of them. Everyone is born with a limitless capacity for enjoyment, but after a very short period in this world every man and woman dies with unfulfilled desires.

The fact that man has desires in this world

without having the means to fulfill his desires, is a sure indication that, according to the Creation Plan, the means to fulfill desires have not been placed in pre-death stage of life. Man in fact has been given these desires so that he may understand the reality of life and plan his life accordingly.

It should also be borne in mind that man is unique in understanding the concept of tomorrow. The animals are also living creatures, but no animal entertains such a concept. The limited animal mind only knows the present. It has no inkling of the future, whereas man's practical experience tells him that in the present world he may anticipate the future, although it is seldom clear whether his desires for the future are achievable.

A clue lies hidden in this reality. This clue tells man that, due to his limitations, the future he desires has not been destined for him in this world. So in order to find this desired future in the next stage of life after death, he has to

make the necessary preparations in this present world.

The present world may be likened to an examination hall. The examination hall duly caters for the basic requirements of the student, but it does not provide for the means to the fulfillment of all his desires. Therefore, the student who regards the examination hall as just an examination hall, and nothing more, will not fall a prey to frustration, whereas the student who comes to regard the examination hall as a means to the fulfillment of his desires will find there nothing but frustration.

According to the Creation Plan of the Creator, the present world is meant as a testing ground. The life support system here provides only for the prerequisites of the trial man has to undergo. Now those who regard the world merely as a testing ground and lead their lives accordingly will not fall a prey to frustration. But those who regard this world as a place which ought to provide for the fulfillment of

their desires will experience utter despair and frustration for, according to the Creation Plan, this world, by design, has not been equipped to fulfill their desires.

According to the Creator's Creation Plan, the right and successful way for man to lead his life on the present planet earth is to regard this place as one of trial rather than of enjoyment. One who does so will be blessed with eternal success in the next life.

A life lived with this concept of testing in mind is quite distinct from that which is lived with the concept of enjoyment to be had at all costs: the plans for both these kinds of life are totally different from one another. To further illustrate this point I should like here to cite some instances of both kinds of life.

The basic difference in this matter is one of thinking. The concept of the test develops Creator-oriented thinking. One who is imbued with this concept tries to find out, in terms of the Creation Plan of the Creator, what he should do

and what he should not do. On the contrary, one whose concept of life is based on enjoyment, will inevitably indulge in self-oriented thinking. He imagines he is to be governed only by his own will, rather than by someone other than himself — a superior being.

One who subscribes to the theory that the earth is a testing ground will focus on such activities as will reap a reward in the life hereafter. However, one who believes in the theory that the earth is a place for enjoyment will engage in such activities as improve his worldly life. So test-oriented thinking makes man content as regards wealth; he will remain content if his basic requirements are provided for. On the contrary, enjoyment-oriented thinking will always lead to the endeavour to accumulate more and more wealth. There is no limit to human greed. If a man who has developed this test-oriented thinking has a small car and his friends want him to buy a bigger car, he will say: “I do not want to make my test paper more

difficult.” By contrast, the enjoyment-oriented person will always be striving not only for a bigger and bigger car, but also for many more cars.

The test-oriented person will keep himself away from futile entertainment, for he will consider it to be a distraction. Conversely, the enjoyment-oriented person will jump into the fray of the entertainment culture, regardless of the amount of time and money he will be squandering. The test-oriented person will avoid all unnecessary wastage of money, time, food, water, and above all, words. Unlike him, the enjoyment-oriented person will not attach any importance to wasteful expenditure. The test-oriented person will consider himself bound by moral values, whereas to the latter, personal interest, and not moral values, is supreme.

According to the Creation Plan of the Creator, what is important in this matter is what kind of personality is being nurtured in

a man while he experiences different sets of situations. Will it be a God-oriented personality or a self-oriented personality? Just as man has constantly to acquire food in the present world for his physical existence, so also does his spiritual existence require a continual supply of spiritual food. It is this spiritual food which develops in man the God-oriented personality.

What is spiritual food? It is the truth, accepted by man whether it comes to him from his own people or someone else. That means that his thinking should not be the result of conditioning: he should form his opinions unaffected by his immediate circumstances. His life should be one of thanksgiving and acknowledgement rather than of ingratitude and denial. He should respond positively, even in a negative situation. He should temper his use of freedom by self-imposed discipline, adhering to justice in all situations, even if it goes against his interests. He should keep before him the eternal rewards

of the Hereafter rather than the temporary gains of this world.

Those who regard the present world as a testing ground and lead their lives accordingly will be lodged in the Hereafter in the Eternal Gardens in close proximity to their Creator. Those, on the other hand, who regard this world merely as a place of enjoyment will finally face the dreadful consequences of being denied access to the eternal world: they will have nothing but deprivation and frustration in store for them.

The Purpose of Life

Just over two years ago — March 11, 2006 to be precise — while I was on an evening flight back to Delhi from Hyderabad, several members of my CPS (Centre for Peace and Spirituality) team, who were accompanying me, distributed some dawah pamphlets and then engaged in dawah work with the passengers. One of the passengers was Miss Neha Batwara. I had no personal contact with her at that time and after the plane landed in Delhi, she went off to Alwar, her home town. However, just over two weeks later, we received the following letter by e-mail on March 28, from Hyderabad:

Respected Maulana Wahiduddin Khan,

I am Neha, working in an MNC. There can be nothing better than getting a job in a top MNC just after graduation. But believe me, I am in search of a more purposeful life. That's why I am writing to you.

I met Khalid Ansari and Sadia Khan (CPS members) on a flight to Delhi and could clearly see the difference your guidance had made to their lives.

Maulana, I know we have been created by God, and we all have a purpose here to fulfill on earth, which, if carried out, will be more satisfying than getting heaven after death. But the point on which I am ignorant is knowing the purpose for which I have been sent here. I shall be grateful to you for the whole of my life if you can help me in any way. I am currently in Hyderabad.

Regards,
Neha Batwara, Software Engg, MIEL
Hyderabad

This letter is not simply a letter from one single individual. It is rather the voice of every soul. It expresses the feelings of every man and woman. Everyone is searching for a purposeful life. It is the call of every person's nature. But

people want to find this purposeful life in the fullest sense before their death in this present stage of life itself. Neither have they any consciousness of the next life after death, nor are they ready to wait for it.

The basic question is: Where does man want to achieve this purposeful life? — in the world made by himself, or in the world made by God? Obviously, this purpose has to be achieved in the world made by God, because the world made by himself just doesn't exist.

In such a situation, it is very natural that man should first of all learn what the laws are that govern this world made by God and what Creation Plan its Creator had in mind while creating the world. This is because, without reconciling himself to it, he can never achieve his goal.

If you have a car and you want to drive it on the street, first of all you will have to learn what traffic rules are followed in the country in which you find yourself, e.g. whether the traffic

keeps to the left or the right. This is a must, for if you start driving on the left in a country in which the law prescribes keeping to the right, you will certainly have a disastrous journey.

The same is true of the much vaster journey of man's life. Man's life's journey is not made in space or in a world made by himself. He undertakes this journey in the world made by God. Therefore, it is essential for all men and women to understand God's creation plan and to build their lives accordingly. In the absence of such planning they cannot save themselves from failure.

Man's own experience is sufficient for him to grasp the point that, if nature makes provision for him to survive and to make satisfactory progress through life, it is all part of God's plan. For example, when a man wants to quench his thirst, water is available everywhere, and it is the water provided by nature which best satisfies his needs. Similarly, when man feels hungry, he appeases his hunger by eating the

food provided by nature. Likewise, everyone needs to breathe in oxygen. Without oxygen no one could survive for even a few seconds. Again, nature is the great provider. It provides both the oxygen and the breathing apparatus with which human beings have been endowed. But if nature provides man with these and all other human requirements, it is because God planned things that way.

Now when it comes to understanding the purpose of life, man must likewise learn about the creation plan of God. He has no alternative but to do so.

The Quran — which is the book of nature — answers our question. In Chapter no. 103, it is stated that history is a witness that 'man is in loss,' except those who follow the course of life set by the Creator.

Looking at it from this angle, we find that human life is divided into two stages – the stage before death and the stage after death. The stage before death is one of action and the stage

after death is one of reaping rewards. What we have to receive after death, we cannot receive before death. What we have to do before death, we shall have no opportunity to do after death.

The study of man shows that every human being is born with unlimited desires. These desires are dear to everyone. But it is also a fact that, in all of human history, no one has entirely succeeded in fulfilling these desires. Many people have spent their whole lives in seeking to fulfill their desires, but it has all been of no avail.

They were ostensibly highly successful in life, but every one of them breathed his last with utter regret and grief that he had failed to fulfill his desires. In the world of today he had failed to find what he wanted.

The study of the world shows that, here, the principle of the pair is well established. Here everything has its pair. Everything becomes complete by uniting with its pair. This principle is enforced at a universal level. Right from earth

to space — everywhere indeed — this system is enforced. For instance, a negative particle has a positive particle as its pair. Human beings are made up of men and women. In the animal world, there are males and females. In the vegetable world also there are the male and female sexes. This system of pairs is found at the universal level in all creatures. In this vast and complete system there is only one exception and that is of human desires. Every person is born with a deep sense of desire, but all die without the fulfillment of their desires. There is desire in the world but its pair, the fulfillment of desire, does not exist here.

Every man and woman born in this world is faced with this question. Everyone wants to find the answer to this question but, before finding a satisfactory answer, he leaves the world in despair without his desires being fulfilled.

American missionary Billy Graham writes that once he received an urgent message from an aged American billionaire. Billy Graham

cancelled all his programmes and immediately left to meet him. When he reached his house, he was ushered into the room where he had to meet him. The billionaire said to Billy Graham without any introduction. “You see I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am going to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?” Billy Graham had no satisfactory answer to his question. The American billionaire left the world with this feeling of deprivation. Billy Graham himself, according to recent information, met with a severe accident, is confined to bed and is now waiting to go to his final destination.

The same is the case with every man and woman in this world. Everyone wants to know the purpose of his life. Everyone is in search of a life full of happiness. Everyone wants to find a life of total fulfillment, but his life ends in failure. Events tell us that all men and women come to regard material things as having real existence. And everyone has tried to find a life

of fulfillment by accumulating such material things. But no one, without exception, has been able to achieve this desired fulfillment.

In such a situation the actual problem is that we keep repeating this same unsuccessful experience. But now, we have to make a reassessment of this matter. The first thing we have to do is to concede in all seriousness that the material things of the world do not provide fulfillment. This being so, where is this source of fulfillment to be found? When human desire continues to exist, then we shall have to believe that it is something real, and when it is something real, then certainly its source of fulfillment should also be available in the universe.

This issue can be understood by the example of a journey. When anyone travels by train or by air, there are two stages to his journey. One is when he is in the course of his journey and the other is the reaching of his destination. For a journey to be successful, the traveler must

understand the difference between the two situations. The traveler who fails to do so will unnecessarily fall a prey to mental tension and will finally lose his balance.

The wise traveler is one who takes the journey as a journey and does not regard it as his destination. It is natural that during the journey all the facilities are not available which can be expected at his destination. But every traveler tolerates this, because he is certain that the state of the journey is a temporary one. Finally his journey will come to an end, and he will reach his desired destination; and after reaching his destination, he will find all that he wanted, which he had not found during the journey.

Our present life covers a very short span of our existence. Its being short itself is a proof that it is a state of journey. It is a period before arriving at the destination. That is why it is not possible to find all the things which we want to find in our present brief lifespan. Undoubtedly, we will find all these things, but we are not

going to find them during the interim stage of our journey.

As we know, our life is divided into two stages, the pre-death stage and the post-death stage. The pre-death stage is that of the journey and the post-death stage is that of arriving at the destination of the journey. It is the reality which should be brought to everyone's knowledge. It is the fact which makes man's life more meaningful, which introduces every man and woman to the purpose which can render his or her life meaningful in the full sense, and be a source of fulfillment.

This explanation of life is linked with the question of man being reborn after death. That is, is there life after death just as we are experiencing life before death? The answer to this question is in the affirmative. It is important to understand that we can find the answer to such questions by using exactly the same scientific method as we do when learning of other facts.

What is the scientific method for learning about scientific realities? It is not as if what we want to know comes to the knowledge of the scientist in its total form. If this condition were applied, all the realities would continue to elude scientists. The progress of knowledge would come to a halt. Man would continue to grope in the dark on the subject of reality. For no reality comes to our knowledge like a mountain which is visible from a distance.

Instead, what happens is that during research, the scientist discovers a clue. On giving thought to this, he arrives at a reality of which he had no prior knowledge. In this world every discovery is made by means of a clue. Clues are, in fact, the key to all discoveries in this world.

For instance, it has been accepted in science that the ‘big bang’ occurred thirteen billion years ego. Similarly, it has been accepted in science that biological evolution has taken place on the earth. It has also been accepted

in science that our universe is an expanding universe, and so on.

Such facts as have become established realities today had not been observed by man. Instead, what happened was that certain indicators came to man's attention. Then by studying these, man expanded his knowledge and went on to greater discoveries. This reality was not visible, but it did exist. Its existence was accepted as a fact, in spite of the fact that nothing but a clue had been observed.

The same is true of life after death, or the next stage of life. There are clear clues regarding the next stage of life. If the clues are given serious thought, they can bring us to the conviction that there is life after death. That there is another stage of life after death is a fact which shall necessarily have to be faced by everyone.

What is this clue? For instance, the human body is made of innumerable cells, which keep degenerating. On the other hand, our digestive system keeps converting the food we eat into

the form of cells. Our digestive system may be compared to a factory of cell formation. By means of this system, after about every ten years our entire body is changed. With new cells our body is replaced by a new body.

It is as if our body repeatedly experiences death. Yet we find that man's consciousness remains intact. It does not die. It is a known fact that man's real existence is his mental existence. This mental existence remains inviolate and survives despite repeated physical deaths. It is a clue which tells us that man, according to his origin, is an eternal creature. A part of this eternal existence is placed in the stage of life before death, while the major part of it is placed in the stage of life after death.

Similarly, another clue in this matter is that man possesses —exceptionally — the concept of justice. Man by his nature wants justice to prevail in the world. That is, the doers of good should be rewarded for their good deeds and the evil-doers should be made to suffer the

consequences of their bad deeds. Keeping this clue before us, the human mind comes to discover that the ideal world, which could not be achieved in the pre-death stage of life due to all kinds of limitations, will be attainable in the post-death period in its perfect form, as desired by man.

Similarly, another clue in this matter is that man is the creature who exclusively has the concept of tomorrow. No animal or non-animal has this concept of the future. When we give deeper thought to this clue, we discover the reality that the desired world which man fails to find in the present limited world, will be found in the post-death period, which is the unlimited stage of life. This will be a world where man will experience fulfillment in the full sense.

The coming into existence of an ideal world after death is as established a fact as other established facts are. However, in the ideal world of the future, one will not automatically find a place. Only those men and women will

find a place in that ideal world who have proved their worthiness in the world before death.

It is the law of nature that all rewards are given to those who deserve them, while those who are not held deserving can never have any kind of reward.

The question is: What is the formula for being held deserving of this ideal world? The formula is only one, and that is purification of the soul.

One who wants to find a place in this ideal world of the future has to prove in this world that he saw the unseen world with his insight while living in the seen world; that he discovered the truth in the jungle of confusion; that he adhered to a positive attitude in the midst of negative experiences; that he raised himself above the animal level and elevated himself to the highest level of humanity; that he distanced himself from such base qualities as ingratitude, dishonesty, selfishness and egoism; that he was

a seeker of paradise with all his heart and soul. In short, he was one who wholeheartedly chose the God-oriented life.

Men and women with such qualities are the gems of humanity. These are the people who will inhabit the ideal world of the future. Those who do not come up to this standard will be rejected and cast into the universal dustbin, where they will be condemned to live a life of eternal regret. They will never be delivered from this life of humiliation and penance.

Paradise and Man

When Professor Nau Nihal Singh finally retired from an American University, he came to India where he was elected to the Rajya Sabha from 1992 to 1998. When he was nearing the end of his tenure, I chanced to meet him and was invited to his home. I found that his whole house was like a huge library. He was a scholar in the real sense.

In the course of our conversation, I learnt that he had done his masters in political science. He later went on to complete his doctorate on international relations. Then he saw an advertisement by an American University for the post of professor on this subject. So Prof. Singh applied for it and was almost immediately called for an interview.

When he reached the USA, he was received by someone who told him that he had been sent by the university to serve as his guide. Then he drove Prof. Singh to the university, where

he was accommodated in the university guest house. This guide came daily to Prof. Singh and showed him around the vast university campus from morning till evening. In this way, he took him to different departments of the university and acquainted him with all the main areas of activities of the institution, for instance, the library, the dining hall, the class rooms, the teacher's club, students meetings, university workers meetings, etc.

Almost a week passed in this way. Prof. Singh started to feel anxious. He said to the chairman of his department, "I was called for an interview and I have been here for a whole week." But so far no interview has taken place. The chairman replied, "Your interview has already been done and we have selected you. Now you can join as soon as possible." Then the chairman told Prof. Singh that the person whom he had met at the airport, and who had acted as his guide, was a senior professor and also his interviewer. He added that they had

learnt of his educational qualifications from the papers he had sent them and now they wanted only to know whether or not he measured up to the culture of the university. This had been the task of his interviewer, who had taken him to the different departments of the university and introduced him to all the activities going on there. The students and teachers had been observant of his behavior during their meetings. And the interviewer too was doing likewise. The report of the interviewer was wholly positive as were the reports of other teachers, students and workers whom he had met during his week-long stay there. Therefore, on the basis of these reports they had selected him.

This incident parallels the situation of Paradise and man. God created a Paradise, a vast world which was perfect in the fullest sense of the word. Here everything was of the highest possible standard. Therefore, God wanted such people to inhabit this world as were flawless in

character and thus fully qualified to live in this ideal environment.

Now God created the present planet earth as a model of that world. Here everything exists that is available in the world of Paradise, the only difference being that Paradise is perfect whereas the present world is imperfect. Paradise is an ideal world whereas the present world is far from being ideal. Paradise is an eternal world whereas the present world is ephemeral. Paradise is free from all kinds of fear and sorrow, whereas the present world is beset by these very ills. Paradise is the world of reward whereas the present world is a testing ground.

According to this plan, God created man and settled him in the present world, on the planet earth. God gave man the opportunity to stay here without applying any curbs on his freedom. Man has the right either to use his freedom in a rightful manner, or to misuse it as he pleases. Every man who is born into this world has two invisible angels of God with him at all times.

They are constantly preparing records of man's words and deeds. It is on the basis of this record that he will be awarded paradise or hell in the next world.

Man will live with complete freedom in the world of Paradise but he will be so mature and conscientious that under no circumstances will he misuse his freedom. He will lead a life of complete discipline in spite of enjoying total freedom. This is the man for whose selection this planet earth was created. All those circumstances that are present in the world of Paradise are also present in this world. Now what is being observed is the man who, while experiencing all kinds of situations, both good and bad, has proved to possess a character worthy of Paradise. That is the one who will be selected and accommodated in the eternal world of Paradise.

God's invisible angles are ever present with man and they are preparing the records of his deeds at every moment. This is the test of man

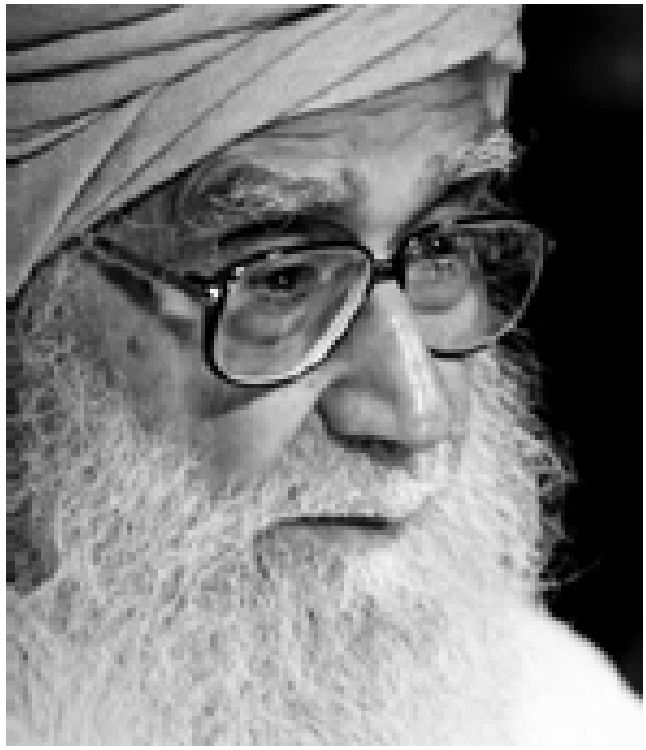
and it is on the basis of this test that the future of every human being will be decided. The test is of man's acknowledgement of the greatness of God on every occasion, which is whether or not he paid attention to the voice of his conscience or ignored it. When man was confronted with logical argument, did he surrender to the truth or go against it? Or else, when there was a choice between ego and truth, did he accept the truth or his own ego, having become an egoist?

Similarly, while dealing with people did he adhere to justice or did he become unjust in his own interests? Was he a good person in private just as he appeared to be in public? Did he make truth his supreme concern or did he make anything else his supreme concern?

In the same way when he came into a position of power did he become victim of corruption or did he adhere to justice even after coming into power? When he received wealth or when he experienced poverty, did he prove himself to be on the path of moderation or did he deviate

from it? In social life, when he was given a front seat, how did he behave and when he was given a back seat, how did he react? Did he subjugate his desires and emotions to principles or did he give in to his desires. The decision about the eternal future of every man and woman will be based on this very record.

The present world has been created for a limited period of time. After the completion of this period, all the human beings born in this world will be presented before God. According to the records prepared by the angels, God will decide the future of every man. Those men and women whose records show that they lived in the world with nobility of character, and used their freedom according to God's will, thus proving that they were fit to be lodged in the environs of paradise, will be selected to inhabit the Gardens of Paradise. And all those who failed to demonstrate nobility of character will be rejected and sent to the universal dustbin to spend a life of frustration and regret and will never escape from this condition.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is an Islamic spiritual scholar who has adopted peace as the mission of his life. Known for his Gandhian views, he considers non-violence as the only method to achieve success. Keeping this ideal consistently before him, he has written over 200 books on Islam and a commentary on the Quran. His most recent publications is *The Prophet of Peace: The Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad* (Penguin Books).

Internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace, he has received, among others, the Demiurgus Peace International Award, the Padma Bhushan, and the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award.

In 2001, he founded CPS International—Centre for Peace and Spirituality. CPS is a non-profit, non-political organization that promotes the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality and undertakes inter-faith dialogue. For questions and queries call us at +91-9999944119, or contact us at info@cpsglobal.org.

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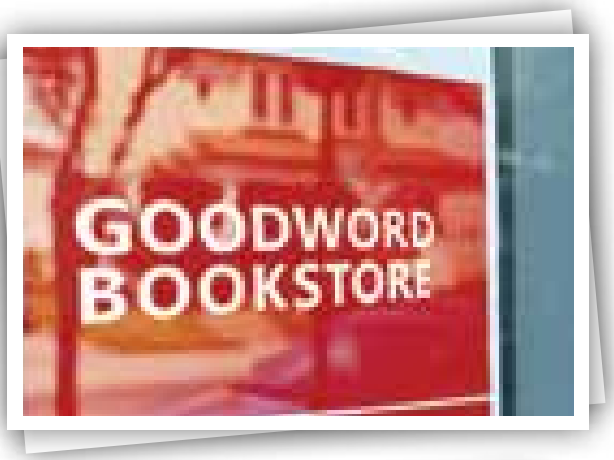

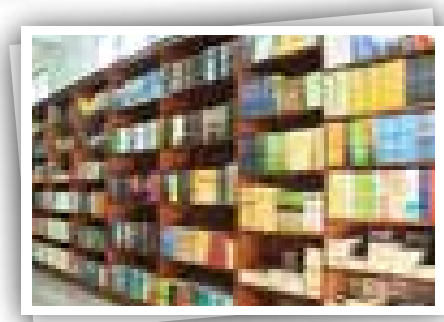

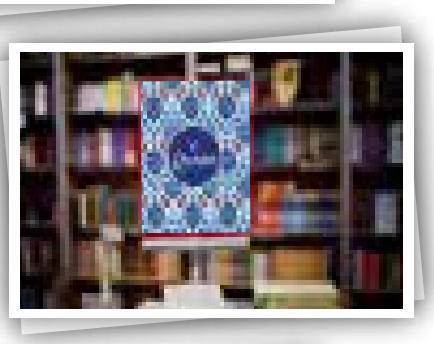

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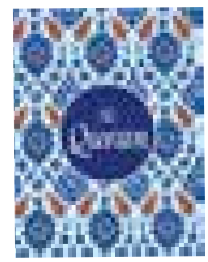

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Man is an eternal creature. His life is divided into two stages—life before death and life after death. Life before death is preparatory period and life after death is the reward period, in accordance with one's deeds. Therefore, each man and woman ought to understand this reality, for on this hinges their eternal future.

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